THE COLORADO COLLEGE PLAN:
BUILDING ON THE BLOCK

2.0

JANUARY 2018
Our opportunity is to realize the vision of Building on the Block by continuing to implement its original ideas; adding two timely initiatives to increase our scope; and adopting one new recommendation to connect students’ learning experiences — across their coursework, across their curricular and co-curricular experiences, and between their CC and post-CC lives.
Key Strategic Investments to Date

RECOMMENDATION NO. 1: THE BLOCK PLAN
Center for Immersive Learning and Engaged Teaching, focusing on undergraduate research, Crown and Colket Centers, international programs, sustainability, community engagement, and on block away.
Tutt Library expanded to be intellectual hub on campus; net-zero energy building
Increased diversity of faculty, staff, and students; Butler Center founded to build inclusive campus
New opportunities in experimental field learning and study abroad
Increased support for faculty scholarship

RECOMMENDATION NO. 2: SUMMER/HALF-BLOCK
Half-block courses on career development
New alumni and parent block break programs
Expanded resources to students over block breaks and on blocks away

RECOMMENDATION NO. 3: INNOVATION
The Big Idea is a student competition to imagine and develop innovative ideas culminating in a presentation competition with a monetary prize to serve as seed money for launching students’ startups
New space for innovation, co-designed by students, which includes a laser cutter, work tables and wipe boards, and meditation space

RECOMMENDATION NO. 4: DISTINCTIVE PLACE
Sustainability concepts integrated into curriculum, renovated Spencer Center one of most energy-efficient buildings on campus, gold-level STARS report benchmarks across metrics
Crown and Colket Centers, international programs, sustainability, community engagement, and on block away
Tutt Library expanded to be intellectual hub on campus; net-zero energy building
Increased diversity of faculty, staff, and students; Butler Center founded to build inclusive campus
New opportunities in experimental field learning and study abroad
Increased support for faculty scholarship

RECOMMENDATION NO. 5: WORKPLACE EXCELLENCE
Enhanced communication and transparency through “In the Loop” and other practices
Professional development programs based on our new leadership philosophy

As a liberal arts institution, we use the learning style of today’s engaged and tech worlds. Changemakers are not limited to the business and tech worlds. Changemakers are courageous doers who put their ideas into action. Innovation at CC seeks to empower all students with creative confidence, and its strong focus on creativity differentiates it from most innovation efforts in higher education. We have an opportunity to build a culture of innovation at CC that reflects our unique strengths and our history of attracting students who are adventurous risk-takers.

The final two recommendations focused on improving the student experience by enhancing our sense of place in the Rocky Mountain West and investing in workplace excellence to foster an organization that is as innovative and dynamic as the CC academic experience. We want our students, faculty, and staff to enjoy the full benefits of our vibrant intellectual community, a place that is unique in the world but also seamlessly connected to it.

Against this backdrop, and given the significant progress we’ve made, the trustees recognize that now is the time to take another leap forward. As we develop two timely new initiatives and a new recommendation to enhance one of the best liberal arts colleges in the world, we will continue to implement our original recommendations, with a special focus on building stronger summer offerings and creating a nationally recognized innovation program.

We are creating summer programs for today’s learners, offering increased experiential learning on campus, throughout our region, and around the globe, as well as additional flexibility for both students and faculty. These programs include creating new linked blocks in film, arts, foreign languages, and environmental education, extended-format courses for STEM and language mastery, summer blocks in courses that have long wait lists during the academic year, and more collaborative research experiences.
In addition, the Career Center is helping more students extend their coursework through hands-on learning in internships. The expansion of our summer programs will result in better use of our facilities as well as new, exciting opportunities for both CC students and students from other colleges who are interested in spending an adventurous summer in the Colorado Rockies.

One of the cornerstones of Building on the Block is Innovation at CC, which provides spaces where work merges with play and encourages students to take risks and build resilience. We seek to redefine success for our students and empower them to lead holistic, balanced lives driven by passion and creativity — lives that include meaningful work. Our three main areas of emphasis — design thinking, risk/failure/resilience, and mindfulness — are all practices and tools that will lead students into the change-making space where ideas become actionable.

Now our opportunity is to realize the vision of Building on the Block by continuing to implement its original ideas; adding two timely initiatives to increase our scope; and adopting one new recommendation to connect students’ learning experiences — across their coursework, across their curricular and co-curricular experiences, and between their CC and post-CC lives.

As she did with the original plan, President Jill Tiefenthaler undertook this new strategic work with a series of community brainstorming sessions in the 2016-17 academic year (a total of eight meetings with over 500 participants).

At the same time, the college and Fine Arts Center took up an intense collaborative planning effort that engaged thousands of CC and Colorado Springs community members. In Fall 2017, the college community had several opportunities to provide input on drafts. The addendum was approved by the Board of Trustees in November 2017.

In addition, the Career Center is helping more students extend their coursework through hands-on learning in internships. The expansion of our summer programs will result in better use of our facilities as well as new, exciting opportunities for both CC students and students from other colleges who are interested in spending an adventurous summer in the Colorado Rockies.

One of the cornerstones of Building on the Block is Innovation at CC, which provides spaces where work merges with play and encourages students to take risks and build resilience. We seek to redefine success for our students and empower them to lead holistic, balanced lives driven by passion and creativity — lives that include meaningful work. Our three main areas of emphasis — design thinking, risk/failure/resilience, and mindfulness — are all practices and tools that will lead students into the change-making space where ideas become actionable.

Now our opportunity is to realize the vision of Building on the Block by continuing to implement its original ideas; adding two timely initiatives to increase our scope; and adopting one new recommendation to connect students’ learning experiences — across their coursework, across their curricular and co-curricular experiences, and between their CC and post-CC lives.

As she did with the original plan, President Jill Tiefenthaler undertook this new strategic work with a series of community brainstorming sessions in the 2016-17 academic year (a total of eight meetings with over 500 participants).

At the same time, the college and Fine Arts Center took up an intense collaborative planning effort that engaged thousands of CC and Colorado Springs community members. In Fall 2017, the college community had several opportunities to provide input on drafts. The addendum was approved by the Board of Trustees in November 2017.

In addition, the Career Center is helping more students extend their coursework through hands-on learning in internships. The expansion of our summer programs will result in better use of our facilities as well as new, exciting opportunities for both CC students and students from other colleges who are interested in spending an adventurous summer in the Colorado Rockies.

One of the cornerstones of Building on the Block is Innovation at CC, which provides spaces where work merges with play and encourages students to take risks and build resilience. We seek to redefine success for our students and empower them to lead holistic, balanced lives driven by passion and creativity — lives that include meaningful work. Our three main areas of emphasis — design thinking, risk/failure/resilience, and mindfulness — are all practices and tools that will lead students into the change-making space where ideas become actionable.

Now our opportunity is to realize the vision of Building on the Block by continuing to implement its original ideas; adding two timely initiatives to increase our scope; and adopting one new recommendation to connect students’ learning experiences — across their coursework, across their curricular and co-curricular experiences, and between their CC and post-CC lives.

As she did with the original plan, President Jill Tiefenthaler undertook this new strategic work with a series of community brainstorming sessions in the 2016-17 academic year (a total of eight meetings with over 500 participants).
Two Initiatives to Increase our Scope

In 2016, Colorado College announced a new alliance with the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, beginning an effort to redefine the contributions of both organizations to the arts in the region. Supporting both missions while expanding learning opportunities, arts programming, and cultural resources for the greater Colorado Springs community, this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity fits in seamlessly with CC’s strategic focus on the experiential learning made possible by the Block Plan, our innovative people, and our special place. Integrating the center and the college — our first new initiative — also demonstrates our ability to seize opportunities that benefit our students and the community.

The second initiative focuses on Workplace Excellence and extends our current work to connect our faculty and staff to the mission of the college and each other, underscoring CC’s commitment to inclusion, wellness, and professional development.
In August 2016, the CSFAC and CC announced an alliance that supports the missions of both organizations while expanding innovative learning opportunities, arts programming, and cultural resources for the greater Colorado Springs community and the college. Our vision is to develop a national model of distinction for an arts center that joins with a college to serve the campus, the community, the region, and the world. Three themes — excellence, access and collaboration, and connectivity — affirm this spirit of engagement and support six recommendations that will contribute to our distinction for years to come.

One: Nurturing a Community of Artists
Nurture an artists’ community that offers innovative arts learning and expertise; creates leaders for local, regional, national, and global arts worlds; offers development opportunities to professionals.

Two: Inviting Visitors to Enliven Our Community
Engage top-quality visiting artists, performers, scholars, and exhibitors; make their work, objects, and events accessible to all; draw on their presence to inspire learning experiences; and creative opportunities for the community.

Three: Building an Innovative Program of Arts Education
Develop an arts education program that becomes highly regarded nationally; create excellent arts education offerings with special emphasis on youth; include professional development for teachers.

Four: Inspiring Creativity through Collaboration
Encourage and sustain vibrant connections across all programs; develop shared physical space and encouraging risk-taking to try new things will contribute to this aim.

Five: Developing an Arts Corridor
Develop an Arts Corridor for our community; encourage local galleries, studios, and other arts and creative entities to locate nearby and become integral members of the community the corridor promotes.

Six: Underscoring our Sense of Place
Encourage sense of place through physical location, Southwest and Spanish Colonial collections, and regional theatre, classes, and exhibits; use these efforts to link the FAC to its traditions and future.

Excellence, Access and Collaboration: Summary of a Strategic Plan for the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center at Colorado College

Initiative No. 2: Integrating the Community to Increase Workplace Excellence
Because people are our greatest asset and our Rocky Mountain location is an essential part of our identity, we have a deep appreciation for holistic well-being and the importance of nurturing a sense of belonging to this special place for all members of our community. This commitment inspires us to connect our work to our mission and to model the college’s values, which we aspire to instill in our students.

Since we began our focus on workplace excellence, we have implemented many successful initiatives that have moved us closer to our goal of making CC one of the best places in the nation to learn and work. Now our opportunity is to develop new ways to connect collaboration and professional development to our mission, build a more inclusive community, and make time to reflect, explore, and innovate. These opportunities will support our aim to provide the finest liberal arts education by emphasizing the role of faculty and staff in shaping the future of the college. This work will have a direct, positive effect on our culture — and will call for our most creative work to date.

To encourage collaboration and professional development as we build a more inclusive community, we could:

• Support intensive block-like projects that require creative framing and input from faculty and staff. Examples include faculty and staff collaborating to design and test the new forms of mentoring recommended in this document, or faculty across disciplines working together to identify ways to promote team teaching.

• Design new professional development programs with substantive, institution-specific content that aligns with the mission of the college. This effort should build on the success of Excel@CC. Continue to prompt faculty and staff to embrace and communicate the value of professional development to the future of CC, and encourage them to make time for it.

• Encourage and prepare more faculty and staff to step into leadership roles, including opportunities to build skills in supporting and developing people, managing change and conflict, and strategically leveraging budgets.

• Review policies, practices, and procedures to distinguish between actions that increase willingness to take appropriate risks and try new things from those that discourage this approach, and use this information to bring about positive change.

To make time to reflect, explore, and innovate, we could:

• Recognize the role of a healthy community in individual wellness. Supporting staff and faculty wellness from a holistic perspective — as we do for students — could increase productivity and model healthy behaviors for students.

• Promote learning across departments and offices to share good ideas for time management, networking, and team teaching; identify tasks that can be streamlined or discontinued; and help the community work smarter, not harder. We should use technology to boost efficiency and support continuous improvement as a matter of course.

• Develop new ways to connect efforts that support the curricular and co-curricular. More intentionally connecting academic departments to student life and other offices could increase collaboration and eliminate redundancy.

Excel at CC resulted from talks about how to support faculty and staff while connecting them more deeply to CC’s mission — a framework that moved us from professional development classes that were fun but not purposeful, to development experiences that benefit the person and the college as a whole. That one change was the key to success.

When CC began a strategic planning process in 2013, a study of strengths and weaknesses revealed the scarcity of collaborative work. A team formed to address this condition underscored the need for a climate of inclusion and support for meaningful collaboration. This recommendation extends and deepens that team’s important contribution.

It should require less effort to recommend a student for an internal Venture Grant than a Goldwater Scholarship. Expectations for routine tasks like responding to emails after hours or being on call while maintaining day-to-day work should be clear. Could we clarify and scale such expectations more appropriately?

These two initiatives — integrating the FAC and the college and integrating the community to extend workplace excellence — build on the themes that guide our 2013 strategic plan and are significant parts of our innovation efforts.
RECOMMENDATION NO. 6

Connect the CC Experience

Help students to build connections across diverse communities, disciplines, and academic and co-curricular experiences, and to link their CC education to their future aspirations.

INITIATIVES

- Improve college readiness in Colorado through a K-12 access program
- Integrate the academic experience across blocks, disciplines, and departments
- Think outside the block: fuse curricular and co-curricular experiences
- Leverage the CC network and experience to help students transition to careers and their post-CC lives
Our students affirm the value of a liberal arts experience that broadens their horizons, deepens their insights, and develops their capacity to identify and pursue their passions. In fact, they want us to go further and find new ways to help them integrate the various parts of their CC experience and connect their college experience to their lives after graduation. Our students also know that the liberal arts residential experience is enriched through the sharing of diverse viewpoints, experiences, and backgrounds. We are pleased that recent initiatives to extend our recruitment have improved the diversity and academic profile of incoming classes. Now we need to double our efforts to make CC accessible to more students from low- and middle-income families. We also recognize that the number of Coloradans who enroll has decreased as CC has become more selective. Therefore, we need to do more to increase the representation of Colorado students at the college as well as support educational excellence in our local community.

The action steps that make up this important recommendation emphasize four opportunities for integration — among students from diverse backgrounds, across the parts of the academic experience, including blocks, disciplines, the classroom and experiential learning, field study, study abroad, and faculty-student research, across academic and co-curricular learning, and between the CC experience and students’ aspirations for their future. Our strategies should deepen and expand our students’ education, help them explore their passions without overextending themselves, and increase the meaningfulness and potential of a CC education.

To help students integrate the parts of their academic experience we could:

- Develop a program to increase the number of college-ready students from marginalized backgrounds in Colorado. This initiative should reach out to K-12 students to ensure that they have the academic credentials, skills, attributes, and information needed to attend CC and other colleges.
- Leverage our innovative and creative culture to continue to invigorate the block. Support team-teaching and faculty teams that collaborate to create connections across the disciplines, deepen collaboration across departments, and think outside the block’s current 9 a.m. to noon daily timeframe.
- Develop new ways to help students reflect on and integrate what they learn across blocks and semesters, even as they manage the intensity of the block. For example, we could support more convergence classes that come together to discuss related topics.
- Design adjacent courses that bridge disciplines, focus on contemporary issues, connect college and world experience, and help students create a narrative of their CC experiences.
- Help students connect to intellectual communities before they declare a major.
- Create and support innovative forms of academic advising for students at all levels. Our program should assist students as they explore academic and co-curricular interests and offer transparent help as they investigate, select, or change their majors.

To integrate academic and co-curricular experiences, we could:

- Engage students with additional advisers and mentors, including staff mentors, to help them integrate their academic and co-curricular experiences and use their time wisely.
- Create small groups of faculty and staff to explore the connections between academic and co-curricular experiences, with an emphasis on problems-centered learning and developing deeper connections between theory and practice.
- Leverage the Fine Arts Center, Outdoor Education, Arts and Crafts, Wellness, and Innovation to encourage students in building creativity, taking risks, and recovering from failure. With these strengths, we have an opportunity to create a model program that addresses the needs of today’s students.
- Use space and technology more creatively to encourage faculty, students, staff, and alumni to gather and create linkages across departments and offices.

To integrate CC experience with students’ aspirations, we could:

- Draw on the expertise of alumni, parents, and supporters to offer new forms of mentoring for students. Find new ways to bring alumni and parents to campus and send students out into the world. Using technology with consistency and sophistication is critical to this aim.
- Build on the success of the Public Interest Fellowship Program by developing new internship programs for students in a variety of sectors.
- Help students develop a narrative through which they view, interpret, and explain their CC experience. We aim to help students integrate the parts of their academic experience and link that experience with co-curricular engagement.
- Encourage and support faculty as they engage students in their professional communities of practice, including them in professional debates and gatherings.
- Engage support for students who pursue national post-graduate scholarships and fellowships.

By strengthening connections, this recommendation is designed to enrich the learning experience. As the great American naturalist E.O. Wilson noted, in the future synthesizers will run the world. Our new recommendation aims to help CC students become these synthesizers — active lifelong learners, imaginative thinkers, and inspired members of diverse communities in a changing world.